

Transforming the Force: How Will It Impact Me?

CSM Carl E. Christian, Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Armor Center

The Army recently designated the next four Interim Brigade Combat Teams (IBCT) as part of its continuing transformation. Three of them will be part of the Regular Army and one will be in the Army National Guard. As each IBCT stands up, the changes will have a major impact on the armor force personnel structure, so I want to share with you how this announcement is likely to affect you, your career opportunities, and the armor force in general.

Two years ago, to meet the changing MTOE requirements of the Force XXI structure and the creation of the first two IBCTs at Fort Lewis, Washington, the armor force was forced to reduce the number of 19K armor crewmen and increase the number of 19D cavalry scouts. We choose to meet this requirement by retraining 19K soldiers to 19D scouts to better balance the force, retain quality armor soldiers in the Career Management Field (CMF), and reduce accession requirements. Although we needed 258 19K Skill Level 10 soldiers to volunteer to make the conversion, ultimately over 250 19K10 soldiers had to be involuntarily selected to convert to 19D. The program was not the success we had hoped for, nor did the soldiers and their leaders receive the program well. The basic problem was that soldiers and their leaders did not fully understand the necessity for the program and its future ramifications on their development and the armor force.

As we move forward with transformation, we do not foresee doing another involuntary reclassification program. We have been working this now far enough in advance, in approximate numbers, to create a better understanding of the needs of the force. Soldiers and leaders, however, will be affected, but they should leverage the opportunities presented and not be wary of them. The first of the new IBCTs is the 172d

Infantry Brigade (Separate) in Alaska, which will transform no later than FY 2003. The creation of the Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) squadron and the insertion of the Mobile Gun System (MGS) platoons into the brigade translates to 143 19Ds, 91 19Ks, and 5 19Zs. The nucleus of this force will come from E Troop/1st Cavalry.

The additional MOS allocations are good news for the armor force. The 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), at Fort Polk, Louisiana, will transform no later than FY 2004, and the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii will transform no later than FY 2005. This brigade will see the same MOS allocations as the 172d Brigade; however, they will have no cavalry troop to grow from, so some personnel may come from other 25th Infantry Division units.

The 2d ACR's transformation will be a little more complex. The 2d ACR will gain 201 19K positions and one 19Z position, while losing 112 19D positions as they transition from HMMWVs to LAV3s and MGSs.

It is obvious the armor force will have to grow in personnel to meet these requirements. Recruiting Command will access more CMF 19 soldiers and the training base at Fort Knox will flex to handle the additional soldiers. The additional 19D and 19K requirements will equate to about one additional fill per year for each of the One Station Unit Training (OSUT) battalions. The Skill Level One soldiers for the new IBCT will not come just from the 1st Training Brigade. Many will come from existing units in order to get a good cross-level of experience in the organizations. The 19Ks in the IBCTs will gain the Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) of R4. The Master Gunners will get an R8 ASI. We will use these to track our trained base. We will not "lock" 19D or 19K soldiers into the IBCTs. For career pro-



gression, armor soldiers will migrate back to legacy force units and other assignments.

Not only must we increase the number of Skill Level One soldiers in the force, but also the numbers in all skill levels. It will be incumbent on the units to coach, teach, and mentor their quality soldiers to develop the noncommissioned officers needed for the force. Additionally, the crew configurations of the LAV3 and MGS mean a higher NCO-to-soldier ratio in these new units. The increase in noncommissioned officers will translate into a need for more to attend NCOES schools. The NCO academy at Fort Knox will ensure that every NCO has the opportunity to attend the appropriate school in a timely manner for soldiers to meet their promotion requirements. We will stabilize the soldiers in these IBCTs during the transition phase to meet the needs of the unit and to ensure that the NCOs are able to meet the branch qualification standards necessary for promotion.

Alaska and Hawaii are two locations that have, in the past, offered few positions for 19Ds and 19Ks. Many armor soldiers will soon have their first opportunity to be assigned there. There will be many new challenges as the IBCTs and the 2nd ACR transform, so soldiers and leaders need to take a close look at volunteering for assignments to an IBCT or 2nd ACR. Never has the opportunity for professional development of our soldiers been so great. With transformation comes that opportunity. Transformation will allow our best soldiers to emerge to become the leaders of a better armor force. That is why "TODAY IS THE BEST DAY TO BE A SOLDIER."